

(APPROVED)

Indiana Tourism Sign Commission

November 28, 2007

Minutes

Amy Vaughan, Indiana Office of Tourism Development Director, called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

Amy reiterated that the charge to this commission as provided by the legislature is to discuss the tourist attraction signage criteria as changes were made in the last legislature. There is another program called the Logo Signage program which has not been addressed in the legislation.

Members present: Amy Vaughan, IOTD, Lynn Lucas, AICVB, Becky Weber, DNR; Jim Poturalski, INDOT, Mike Huber, Elkhart Co CVB, Senator Mike Delph, Meredith Easley, Easley Winery; Peggy Hobson, Indiana Tourism Council, Senator Glenn Howard, Representative Terri Austin

Tourism Staff present: Anicia Richardson, Jan Bledsoe

Amy reminded the group that the next meeting on December 12 will be held at 1 North Capitol, Suite 110, Indianapolis (1-4:30p).

Guests present:

Larry Rust, INDOT

Laura Minzes, DNR - Association of Museum and Historic Sites

Jeremy Yackle, Harrison Co CVB

George Ethridge, Golf Shores Fun Center

Bob Kirlin, Town of Nashville & Brown Co CVB

Jennifer Hodge, State House Tour Office

Mark Webb, Brewers of Indiana Guild

Penn Jensen, B.I.G. Upland Brewing

Jo Wade, Lafayette/West Lafayette CVB

Brian Blackford, IOTD

Emiley Matherly, IOTD

Joe Bruno, INDOT

Lalit Gorg, INDOT

Dick Thompson, AICVB

Purpose of Commission – Amy Vaughan

Amy referenced a copy of the PowerPoint presentation as she highlighted the new legislation HEA 1012. She pointed out the language that is new including:

- ✓ Established 11 person sign study commission to review current policy and provide a report.
- ✓ Established new criteria to be added to the Tourist Attraction Sign policy.

Current Program and Policy – Jim Poturalski

Jim reviewed the current federal rule on signs and explained the definition for traffic control devices, particularly signs such as regulatory signs, warning signs, guide signs, specific service signs (our discussion topic) and emergency management signs.

He explained that the separate logo signage program was developed several years ago and implemented new attraction portion in 2001 to assist motorists and the industry. (business logos on informational panels at interstate exits)

He reiterated that Tourist Destination Signs are for directional purposes only. Commercial advertising in the right-of-way is prohibited. A facility shall be eligible for tourist-oriented directional signs only if it derives its major portion of income or visitors during normal business season from road users not residing in the area of the facility.

Jim discussed the goals of the Tourism Office and INDOT as they work together to implement the signage policy:

- ✓ Satisfy the Federal guidelines – focus is on directional signs only
- ✓ Provide motorists with reliable directional information to quality facilities
- ✓ Provide tourism industry with cost effective way to direct the motorist to their facility.

Two types of signs in policy this commission will be discussing:

1. TODS - tourist oriented directional signs - state roads and US highways
2. SGS - Supplemental Signage program for interstates

Senator Howard raised issue about historical markers as he is concerned with lack of history being displayed on our highways. Larry Rust reported that the Indiana Historical Society has a historical marker signage program. It is utilized much more frequently on side roads. Concern about how much a highway driver can read and process at highway speed. Directional signs can guide visitors to the historical sites. Rest area group has some signage interest. Brown and white signs are currently in use for historic sites.

Standard requirements for both types of signs

- ✓ Hours of operation – open at least 5 days a week, 6 hrs a day, 8 months of the year
- ✓ Minimum attendance – 50% of attendance must be from actual tourist traffic
- ✓ Attraction distance from intersection (TODS – 7 miles, SGS – 10 miles)

Limitation to attraction signage

- ✓ Maximum number of signs for an attraction at the intersection is two.
- ✓ Signs are placed on the most direct route
- ✓ Color-coded by category
- ✓ Signs not permitted to direct to or beyond another state highway or freeway.

Representative Austin raised issue about the town of Atlanta that has lost their town signage. Concern is out there regarding their large festival and there is no signage allowed to direct them from the closest road since most traffic is on Hwy 37. Jim responded that kind of signage falls under a different policy, but there are several temporary options that can be discussed. INDOT to follow up.

Jim reviewed the categories under each sign type - TODS and SGS. The policy was last updated in 2004.

Additional TODS items

- ✓ Seasonality has different guidelines (5 miles from intersection, additions to sign)
- ✓ Attraction location
- ✓ If approved, INDOT creates, installs and maintains signage

Additional SGS items

- ✓ Attraction location – may need trailblazing signs before SGS signage installed
- ✓ If approved, INDOT approved consultant creates and installs, INDOT maintains

Way finding/Consolidated Sign program – Proposals by communities provided to INDOT (via IOTD) for approval. If approved, community installs and maintains signs. Way finding is normally used in downtown areas (attractions located in close proximity to each other) and Consolidated are on state roads leading into a community.

Application process – Jim Poturalski

Jim reviewed the process to apply for signage. Forms and policy are available on the IOTD website (Tourism.IN.gov). IOTD does the initial screening and then forwards the material to INDOT. INDOT does a site visit.

Lynn Lucas asked if it would be helpful for attractions to go to their local governments first. Jim suggested they do that if they need other trailblazing signage to get to the INDOT signage.

If application is denied, but the reason for denial is addressed, an applicant can re-apply.

Jim reviewed sample applications for clarification.

New Criteria

1. Jim shared one proposed amendment to the criteria regarding historical sites that has been discussed. The key change is the removal of the distance requirement.

Lynn Lucas asked if National Historic Landmarks fell under the Historic Sites category or if they are addressed on the National Register or State Register of Historic Places. Wants to make sure they are signed due to their significance. Jim responded that he believe they were included.

Representative Austin asked about agri-tourism businesses that are on the interstate signage program but are not required to be on logos. Anicia Richardson explained that the interstate signage program was around before agri-tourism was recognized as a tourism category. No groups have been forced to leave their program of origin.

Representative Austin asked if there has been a cost comparison between our Indiana logo program and the logo programs in other states. Larry Rust reported that Indiana's program cost is higher than other states but he reminded the group that Indiana's statute required our logo program to be self-sustaining. Many other states have subsidized programs.

Representative Austin asked if the commission would be open to moving agri-tourism to logo signage and allow historic districts to use the supplemental signage program. Jim replied that space is limited but group should discuss ramifications. Also, that if the move was based on cost it is not necessarily beneficial because of SGS upfront costs.

2. Trademark destination brand – Amy Vaughan reported that the new legislation requires that a trademark destination brand listed on the National Register or State Register category be created. This term is relatively new and that the Commission must decide how to define it. Is a business w/ a trademark who wants signs required to register with the Indiana Secretary of State? And what is the definition of a destination brand. This would only apply to future applications under the defined category.

Becky Weber wanted to know what the bill authors had in mind. Amy gave the example of Brown County – Artist Colony of the Midwest. Current policy does not allow extra words beyond name as it does not give any directions or meet any other purposes under current signage policy. Bob Kirlin gave more details about the Brown County situation. Nashville wants to have signage on I-65 and cannot overcome the mileage restriction for signage.

Representative Austin wants to post the policy suggestions on tourism website to get feedback before final recommendations are made. Amy Vaughan offered to include this information in the email blasts that go out from the Tourism Office.

Other ideas for change

- ✓ Distance from intersection – what's the magic number?
- ✓ Sign on more than one state road – how to handle?
- ✓ Add categories? (ex. Breweries, community entertainment venues, destination shopping, non-tourism destinations such as community buildings, trails)

- ✓ Should categories requirements be revised?
- ✓ Revise hours of operation?
- ✓ Revise policy to include new tourism business – less than a year old?

Meredith Easley asked if there should be other factors than just meeting a category qualification. Are businesses under consideration doing enough to build tourism business for our state or just applying for a state sign? Should we consider this before making a decision?

Mike Huber gave the example of new attractions who can't meet some of the qualifications, but they have made significant financial investment. Could there be a scoring system used that if you score poorly on one section, it would be possible to make it up on a different category.

Lynn Lucas reminded the group that the new efforts to assist communities through the Roger Brooks initiative in 2008 encourage us to be flexible enough to assist those communities as new development comes online.

Jim Poturalski reminded the group that although we have some flexibility, we still have to abide by the federal guidelines.

Representative Austin wants to know if we have samples from other states to review prior to the next meeting. Larry Rust agreed to provide some samples.

Questions from the commission

Amy Vaughan asked commission members for questions. She asked the group to look at other state websites, read over the material passed out today, and come back with more questions and ideas at the next meeting.

Representative Austin asked for a comparison chart of surrounding states, particularly around the categories that we are considering adding or changing.

Meredith Easley asked if state could assess commission members through a quick survey to see where commission members are currently in their thought process. Amy Vaughan offered to share that with meeting audience as well.

Public Comment

Jo Wade – Lafayette/West Lafayette – Would like to email her comments

Jeremy Yackle – Harrison County CVB - Would like some flexibility to count out of state traffic as tourists even if they are under the fifty mile benchmark. Leave enough flexibility to make exceptions that make sense.

Penn Jensen – Upland Brewing Company is a trademark, Upland Brewery is a destination. Does Upland Brewery qualify as a trademarked destination? Jim P reminded group we still have to abide by rule regarding “advertising in the public right-of-way.”

Mark Webb – Brewers of Indiana Guild – 20 breweries throughout Indiana. Many breweries serve as destinations. Also considering what Indiana can do to help solve “hops shortage.”

Dick Thompson – AICVB lobbyist – anything that can be done to keep tourists in our state is a good idea.

George Ethridge – Golf Shores Fun Center – Applauds the work being done by commission. Asks group to keep family entertainment in mind as they make decisions on new categories.

The meeting adjourned at 3:55 p.m. The next meeting will be Wednesday, December 12 (1-4:30p) will be held at 1 North Capitol, Suite 110, Indianapolis.